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ABSTRACT

This paper derives its foundation from recent concepts of accountability in education. Accountability presupposes a determination of the goals (i.e. the mission) of the educational component and what constitutes the achievement of those goals (i.e. evaluation). The basic design for the evaluation program described here is the self-study approach by committee, which is used by regional accrediting agencies. This flexible method may be conducted entirely by internal personnel, may utilize an outside consultant, or may involve a combination of the two. It consists of three major components: (1) an assessment of the present environment, (2) an analysis of the data by members of the study team, and (3) a written summary report to be used as a basis for determining program continuance or modification. This document describes the evaluation program, discusses the various purposes and methods of evaluation, and reviews the related literature. A bibliography is appended. (DC)

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A PROPOSED MODEL FOR EVALUATION

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INTRODUCTION

In today's educational environment, the watchword rapidly coming to the fore is accountability. Accountability, prior to its recent rise in the context of education, has been a word and process typically associated with responsibility for obligatory accounting of public funds by persons in public service (2:1). More recently after moving through a variety of interpretations, Elsa Rosenthal suggests that "...accountability represents acceptance of responsibility for consequences by those to whom citizens have entrusted the public service of education." (2:2). Implicit within that definition is the notion that accountability requires some conceptualization of what the educational institution and its constituent parts wants to do, as well as what constitutes achievement of the goals. Determining what constitutes achievement of the goals is evaluation.

The Need for Evaluation

Inherent to every rational human being is a psychological need to compare. In broad terms, every act undertaken involves a formal or informal evaluation and comparison. Products in the market are evaluated

and compared with similiar products; behaviors of the individual are evaluated either in terms of personal consequences or observation of others. Evaluation is with us in every conscious act, although we do not recognize it consistently.

Educationally, the need for evaluation derives from a base of three general concerns:

1. To assess the current status
2. To determine attainment of objectives
3. To provide a basis for continuance or modification

Before attempting to make a decision related to an educational program, a systematic study of the currently operating plan must be made. By citing what the circumstance is now, the baseline data is generated from which all else in the evaluation, as well as decisions resulting from the evaluation, will flow.

Upon completion of an assessment of the current status, which would contain detailed annotations of objectives for the organization or individual to pursue, a determination may be made as to the attainment or non-attainment of the stated objectives. To ascertain the attainment of objectives, however, is only a portion of the question. Of equal importance is the discovery and consideration of the consequences associated with each objective. The consequences must be dealt with in terms of both accomplishment and non-accomplishment of objectives since it is actually the consequences of the educational process, the effects, as it were, that are being judged (10:11).

The third need for evaluation in the educational environment is to provide the basis for continuation of planned objectives, or to indicate

the need to begin planning to modify the program. The decision to continue or modify is founded upon the evaluation of the consequences as well as the attainment or non-attainment of objectives.

Evaluation Methods

A variety of forms are used to operationalize the evaluation process. The following list summarizes the most common forms of evaluation with each making their appearance individually or in any combination:

1. Self
2. Consultant (professional)
3. Peers
4. Outside Agencies
    a. Accreditation organizations
    b. State and Federal agencies

Each form is self-explanatory, as the name indicates, and uses the same base process of assessing the current status to determine the scope of consequences resulting from the achievement or non-achievement and development of objectives in order to arrive at a systematic decision point to continue the program as it was planned or to modify the plan in some manner.

Review of Related Literature

Evaluation, as a formalized process, is a new area within the educational context and has its foundation in the accountability movement that has recently experienced a surge of popularity. Accountability has been advocated primarily by organizations that serve as funding sources for the learning activities carried on by educational institutions.

Typically, these sources of funds are represented by federal, state, and local agencies, as well as boards of control. In addition, educational institutions themselves are increasingly becoming advocates of accountability and evaluation practices.

The literature related to evaluation and accountability indicates that the basis for the process rests in the mission statement (8;3:21; 7:32; 6:43; 1:43). While the mission statement is generally thought of as a global umbrella under which the institution operates, statements may also be developed by departments, disciplines, and individuals that compliment the institutional document and also provide the foundation for evaluation of those specific component parts.

In practice, the mission statement is designed to respond to the needs of the constituent groups the educational component serves, as well as needs associated with the component itself. On the institutional level, those constituent communities are demonstrated most frequently by reference to local, state and national needs as well as personal needs articulated by the institution via the staff. Mission statements, regardless of the level of activity within the educational system, cannot be static concepts, but, more appropriately, must be flexible in order to accommodate the state of flux that occurs as a result of human societal activities that surround and act upon the component.

Perhaps the best graphic representation of the interrelatedness of the educational system with constituent groups is proposed by Banathy (3:9) and shown in Figure 1. The illustration indicates the place of component systems in the large fabric of society and how they overlap in providing their contribution to society. By changing component titles, the inter-

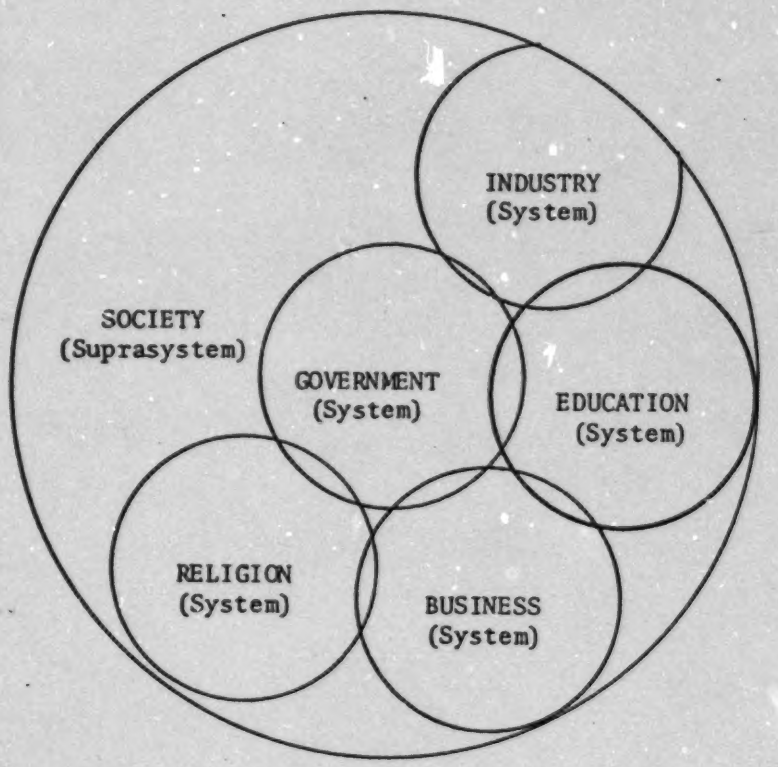

Fig. 1.--Interrelatedness of System Components (3:9)

relatedness of a variety of systems may be graphically illustrated. For instance, the large component may be labeled Community College and the subsystems within labeled faculty, administration, staff and students. Another system may indicate the large component as Department with subsystems of discipline within that Department.

Once the mission statement has been developed, objectives may then be devised that provide the educational component with the roadmap to follow in attaining the mission. The evaluation becomes a function then of determining objective accomplishment in terms of the mission statement and the consequences of attainment/non-attainment of objectives. As an integral part of the evaluation, the processes used to accomplish the objectives (mission statement) are subjected to close examination and, if necessary, alternative processes identified that will more adequately insure fulfillment of the objectives.

Evaluation Model

An essential requirement for an educational evaluation model is that it be stable and yet adaptable so that the framework may be applied to any component within the system. By devising a stable framework, the model is used by applying different data bases to meet the variable needs for each component--e.g. the total institution, a department, a discipline or an individual administrator, faculty, or non-certified staff evaluation.

Basic Design

The basic design for this evaluation program is the self-study approach by committee similiar in nature to methods used by regional accrediting agencies. The self-study model is flexible in its application

in that it may be carried on entirely by internal personnel, may utilize an outside consultant, or may utilize a combination of the two.

Major components of the plan are:

1. An assessment of the present environment
2. An evaluation of the assessment data
3. A written summary report

Within each major category are several subcategories that make up the substance of the study and provide the framework from which decisions may be made.

Category 1

In category 1, six subcategories are indicated including:

1.1 The Mission Statement. Each component requires a mission statement that is unique unto itself yet congruent with the other elements of the system so when taken as a whole, they reflect the mission of the total system. In practice, then, in a Community College, there would be opportunity for five distinct mission statements representing the institution, a department, a discipline, a faculty member, and an administrative unit each unique, yet each relating to the total.

1.2 Objectives satisfied to accomplish the Mission Statement. An integral part of the environmental assessment is the determination of which objectives, previously determined and agreed upon to accomplish the mission statement, have been satisfied or not. This subcategory provides the basis

for the subsequent consideration of alternate strategies for accomplishing the mission statement by spotlighting the objectives not satisfied and analyzing the reasons for non-accomplishment.

1.3 Resource allocation to support the Mission Statement. Resources necessary to accomplish the mission statement must be reviewed in the environmental assessment in order to provide data bases for decisions regarding the effectiveness of effort directed to the mission and to the development of alternative strategies. Resources available to accomplish the mission include: (a) human in the form of faculty, staff, administration, affirmative action plans; (b) physical in the form of equipment, plant, instructional facilities, and (c) fiscal in the form of dollar allocations and accounting procedures. In operation, this subcategory would assume different configurations according to the system component being evaluated. Each category of resource would, however, be studied inasmuch as each has a role in achieving the mission statement for each system component.

1.4 Organization designed to carry out the mission. This subcategory of the environmental assessment, though present to a degree for all system components, is probably more appropriate for the institution as a whole, the department, and the discipline. Inherant to this category is the question: How does (a) the organizational structure and (b) the policies and practices of the system components relate to,

reinforce, or denigrate against the mission and its accomplishment? Specific areas to assess include the administrative structure and support, the faculty structure and support, committee processes, policy matters adopted or needed, and current practices adopted and in need of revision.

1.5 Instructional program designed to carry out the Mission. The crux of the mission statement of the institution and thus for each system component is the curricular program. Without the curriculum, the mission becomes transparent and meaningless. Emphasis in this subcategory of the environmental assessment is placed on the determination of whether the curriculum meets the needs of students in terms of their immediate and future goals, whether the curriculum is consistent with and complements the "real world" of society in terms of the personal, social, avocational and vocational demands placed on people, whether the degree requirements are compatible with the mission and the need, whether general education is available and "general", whether growth, both professional and personal, is available to faculty, staff, and administrators, and whether opportunities are available for utilizing alternative methods and processes of instruction.

1.6 Miscellaneous Interests or Concerns. This subcategory is intended to provide an opportunity to assess the environment in areas not specified elsewhere in the evaluation model. Areas of interest may include such items as:

(a) student life, (b) support capabilities, (c) student achievement.

Category 2

Category 2 of the plan is an examination of the environmental assessment data by members of the study team. The major task of this category is to arrive at a team judgment, based upon the data, of the strengths, weaknesses, and the consequences of each for the particular system component being evaluated. The objectives specified by the system component to fulfill the mission statement (subcategory 1.2 above) are carefully reviewed to provide the necessary data base for the judgments required in this category of the plan.

Delineation of the strengths and weaknesses of the system component and consideration of possible consequences that may be obtained from those specifications provides the information necessary for decision-making relating to the final category of this plan. With a consideration of the consequences of the strengths and weaknesses, the alternative strategies may be prescribed with more accurate consideration of possible trade-offs in resources to achieve the mission statement.

The development of alternative strategies, to arrive at an accomplished mission statement, provides a base for new objectives to correct weaknesses or re-energize strengths, for succeeding years. In addition, the resulting data from the evaluation process allows for the rational ordering of priorities within the system component by the study team or the members of the component.

Category 3

Category 3 of the plan is the bringing together of data into a summary written report. The strengths and weaknesses are detailed and recommended alternative strategies outlined. In conjunction with the alternative strategies, consideration of the consequences associated with each strategy is presented to aid the system component in the decision-making process related to reordering the redefining objectives used to accomplish the mission statement. The mission statement itself may be redrawn as a result of the evaluation process to provide more adequate services or different services to more adequately meet the needs of the constituents groups of the system component.

Summary

This paper derives its foundation from the recent concepts of accountability as it relates to educational processes. To be accountable presupposes a determination of the goals (e.g. the mission) of the educational component and what constitutes the achievement of those goals (e.g. evaluation). Evaluation requires the assessment of the present environment and a determination of objective attainment to provide data bases for decisions regarding continuation or modification of the educational plan. The proposed evaluation model is composed of three major components including an assessment of the present environment, an evaluation of the assessment data, and a written summary report. The written summary report includes delineation of strengths, weaknesses and the consequences of each as well as alternative strategies and consequences to improve the identified weakness.

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APPENDIX A

EVALUATION PROCESSES